

AN

ORIGINAL Essay,

ON DERANGED Menstruation,

FOR

The degree of Doctor of Medicine,

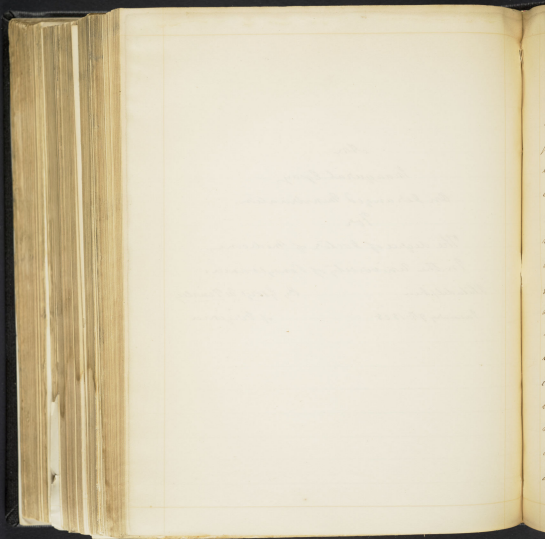
In the University of Pennsylvania,

Philadelphia

By George W. Tinsley

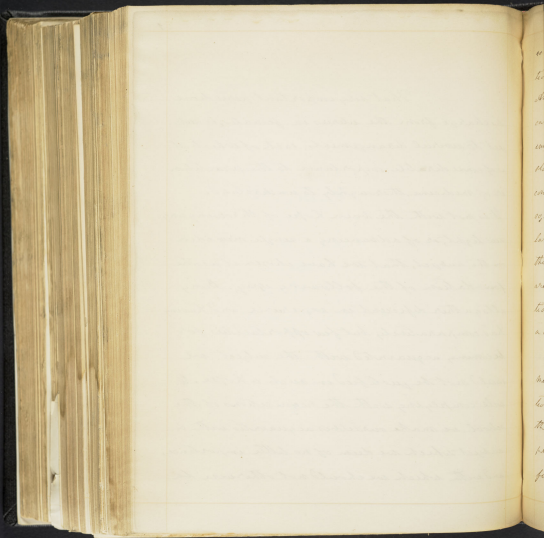
January 9th 1828

of Virginia



That very important periodical discharge from the uterus in females, is subject to several derangements, each of which, it is of considerable importance to the practitioner of medicine, thoroughly to understand.

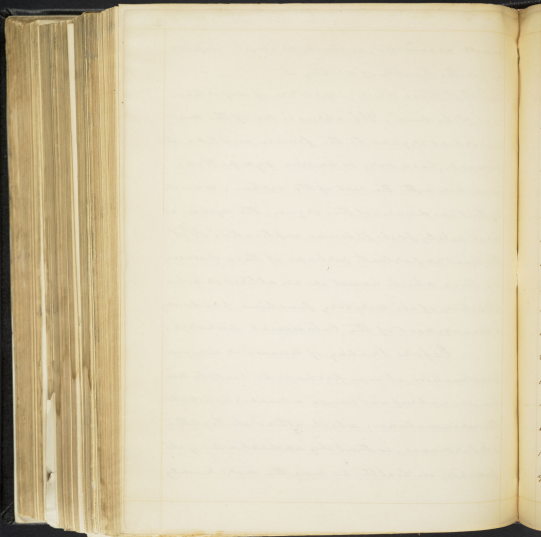
It is not with the vain hope of throwing any new light, or of advancing a single new idea on the subject, that we have chosen it as the foundation of the following essay. Being altogether deficient in experience, and having had comparatively but few opportunities for becoming acquainted with the subject, we could not be justified in such a hope. If while complying with the requisitions of the school, we make ourselves acquainted with a subject which we deem of no little importance, and with which we should not otherwise be



so well acquainted, we shall be amply compensated for the trouble of writing it.

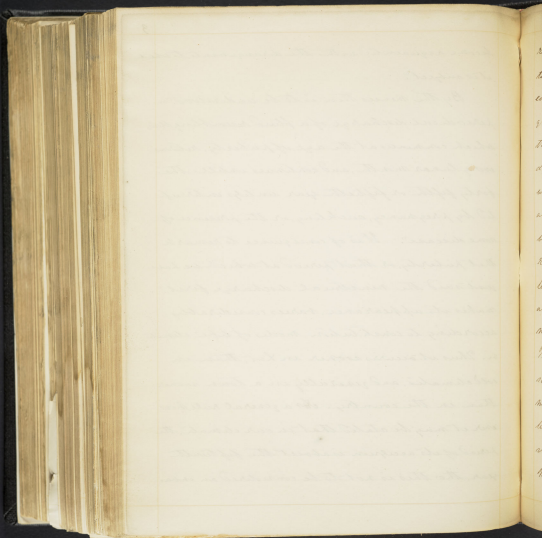
And that these arrangements are of importance cannot be denied. The uterus is one of the most important organs to the female, and like the stomach, has a very extensive sympathetic connection with the rest of the system; so much so, that in diseases of this organ, the system at large rarely fails to become implicated. Not the least important, perhaps, of these diseases, are those which consist in an altered or vitiated action of its secretory functions, producing a derangement of the Catamenial discharge.

Before treating of diseased or deranged menstruation, it may perhaps be best, to mention, in as brief and concise a manner as possible, the circumstances which attend its Healthy performance, so that by understanding its function in health, we may the more readily



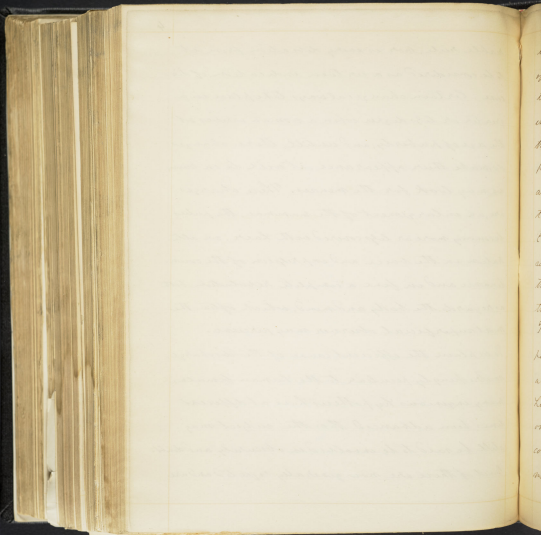
become acquainted with the arrangements, to which it is subject.

By the menses then is to be understood, "a periodical discharge of a fluid resembling blood, which commences at the age of puberty, returns every lunar month, and continues untill the forty fifth or fiftieth year unless interrupted by pregnancy, suckling, or the presence of some disease". It is of consequence to remark that puberty, or that period at which we have just said the menstrual discharge first makes its appearance, varies considerably according to constitution, modes of life, climate, &c. Thus it occurs sooner in hot, than in cold climates, and generally in a town sooner than in the country. As a general rule however it may be stated that in our climate, the period of its accession is about the fifteenth year, tho' this is not to be considered an invari-



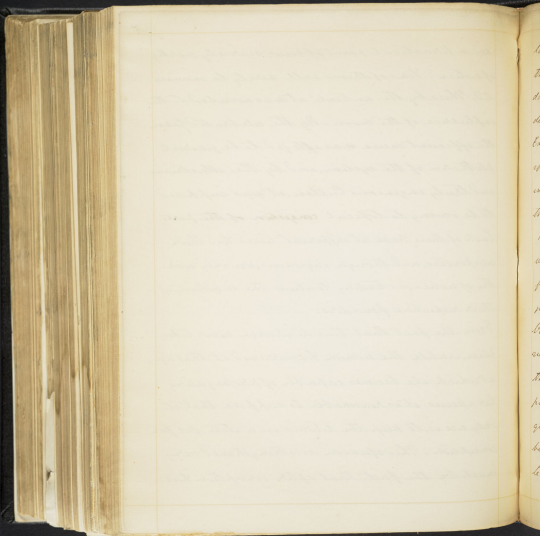
riable rule, nor is every deviation from it to be considered as a certain indication of disease. Certain changes always take place in a greater or less degree when a woman arrives at the age of puberty, and until these changes do make their appearance, it will be in vain we may look for the menses. These changes are, an enlargement of the mammae, the pubes becoming more or less covered with hair, an alteration in the voice and expression of the countenance and in fine a complete revolution, both as regards the body and mind, which often the most superficial observer may perceive.

To explain the efficient cause of this discharge, constitutingly peculiar to the human female, many ingenious hypotheses have at different times been advanced, tho. the subject may still be said to be involved in obscurity and doubt. Most of these are now generally rejected and are



in a practical point of view, scarcely worthy of notice. Some of them will surely be enumerated. Thus, by the ancients, it was ascribed to the influence of the moon. By the celebrated John, the efficient cause was alleged to be general plethora of the system, and by the illustrious and truly ingenious Cullen, it was supposed to be owing to topical congestion of the parts. Each of these have at different times had their supporters, and though ingenious, are only worthy of notice, as tending to show the ingenuity of their respective founders.

From the fact that this discharge never takes place, until the woman has arrived at that age, at which she becomes capable of propagating her species, it is reasonable to suppose that its only use is, to keep the uterus in a state fit for conception. This opinion is strengthened very much by the fact, that after conception has



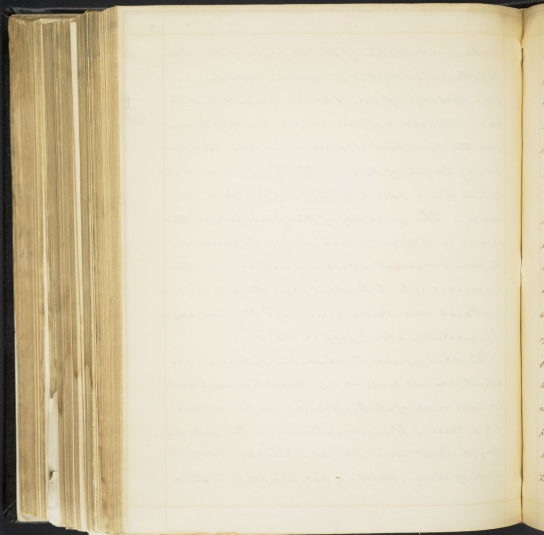
taken place. the menses having accomplished the end for which they were designed, cease, nor do they make their appearance again untill after delivery, nor so long as the woman continues a nurse. Exceptions it is true are sometimes met with as respects this latter assertion, but they are so rare, that instead of weakening, they only tend to strengthen the general rule.

It has been a question among practitioners of medicine whether the discharge under consideration proceeds from the uterus or vagina. If what we have just said respecting the use of the menses be true, it would certainly be more reasonable to suppose that they proceed from the uterus, as they would then, more certainly subserve the purpose, for which they were designed. The question may however be considered as having been settled, from the circumstance, of the celebrated Mr Hunter having seen it coming from the

curling extremities of the arteries of the uterus.

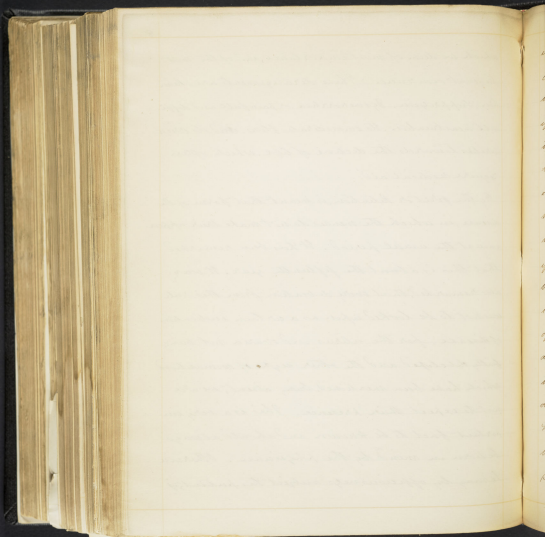
It follows then that it is a genuine secretion, and not a discharge of pure blood, as is maintained by some. That it is not mere blood is rendered evident from the fact, that it never coagulable, tho kept for any length of time, a thing which never fails to take place when pure blood is taken from the system. The quantity of fluid discharged, tho varying in different women, and perhaps even in the same woman at different times, may be stated as a general rule, to be about from three to six ounces at each menstrual period, and the time employed, is generally, about five or six days.

The arrangements to which the Catamenia are subject, are all more or less important, and would perhaps, each of itself, afford, an ample subject for a thesis. It is our intention in the following essay, to treat, in as precise a manner as possible, of all of them, dwelling particularly on those

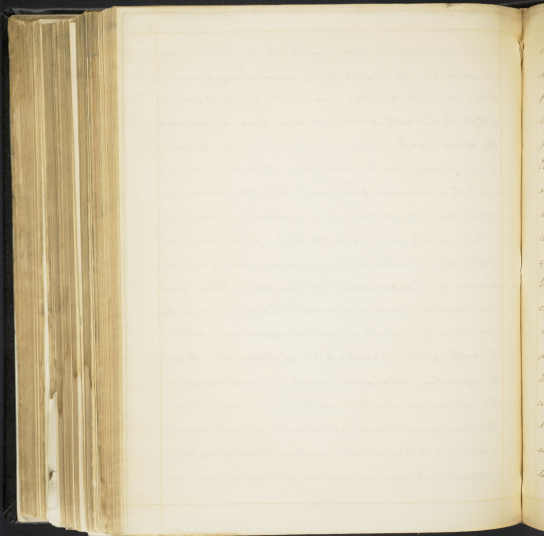


which we deem of most importance, and of the most frequent occurrence. These derangements are. Retention, Suppression, Dysmenorrhea, or painfull and difficult menstruation. An immoderate flow, and its irregularities towards the decline of life, which often require medical aid.

By the first or Retention, is meant that form of the disease, in which the menses do not make their appearance at the usual period. It has been remarked that this is about the fifteenth year. It was also remarked, that every deviation from this rule was not to be looked upon as a certain indication of disease, for the uterus and ovaria not being fully developed and the other signs of womanhood which have been mentioned, being absent, we are not to expect their presence. This is a very important fact to be known and should always be born in mind by the physician. Otherwise he may by officiousness subject his patient, if

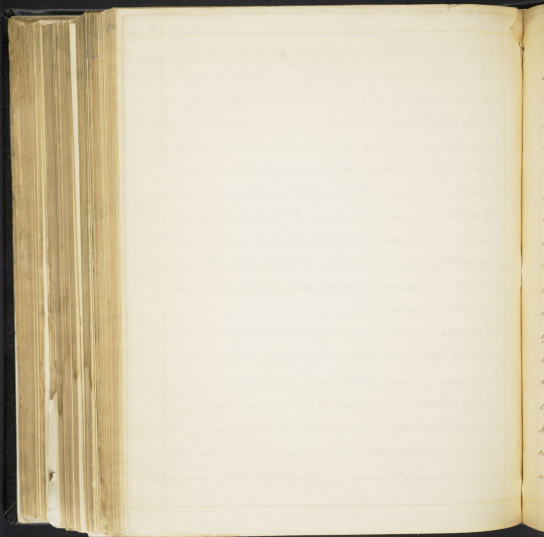


indeed she can be called such, to very serious inconvenience, by prescribing emmenagogues & medicines, when in fact, nature, one of our best physicians, if left to herself, would in due time accomplish the desired end. When however the signs of puberty are present and nature seems to have accomplished all that was necessary, and still the menses do not appear, symptoms of a constitutional and local nature rarely fail to make their appearance, and if they be not attended to, occasion present inconvenience and permanent ill health. These symptoms constitute what is called Chlorosis, consisting of a sense of lassitude and sluggishness, attended with great prostration of strength. Appetite the symptoms also attend, such as costiveness, acidity, flatulency, loathing of food, or as some times happens a preternatural appetite or one much vitiated or depraved, the patient having a great propensity to eat unnatural articles of food, as

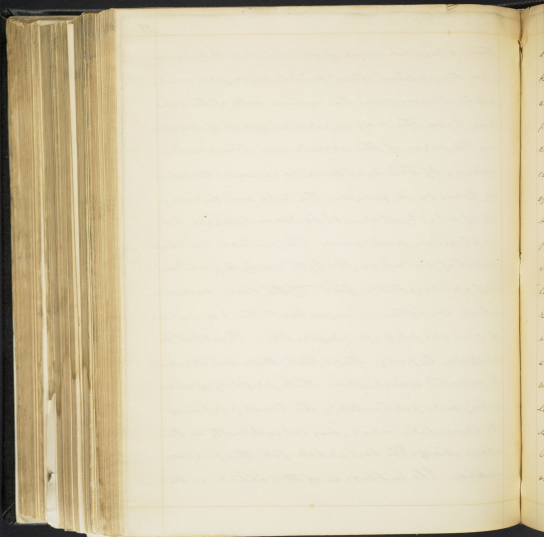


chalk and such like articles. No there are sometimes superadded, oedematous swelling of the feet and ankles, dyspnoea palpitations, pain in the hips, back and loins and as sometimes happens, a considerable tumefaction of the abdomen. Causes. This derangement is generally owing, to a want of energy, either in the system at large or the uterus in particular. It may also be the consequence of malformation of the organs of generation or a deficiency of them, as the ovaries. It is also occasionally dependent on the presence of some chronic disease.

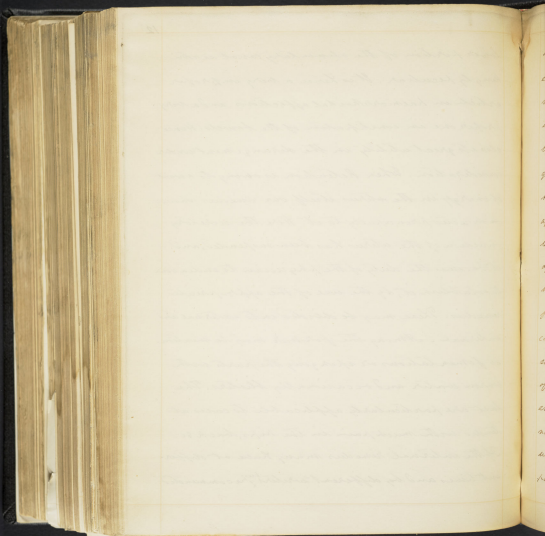
As in every other disease to which man is subject, our treatment here must vary according to the circumstances of the case and the cause producing it. When it is owing to a want of energy in the system at large, it is obvious that whatever will invigorate they will in a corresponding degree tend to remove the disease. To fulfill this indication



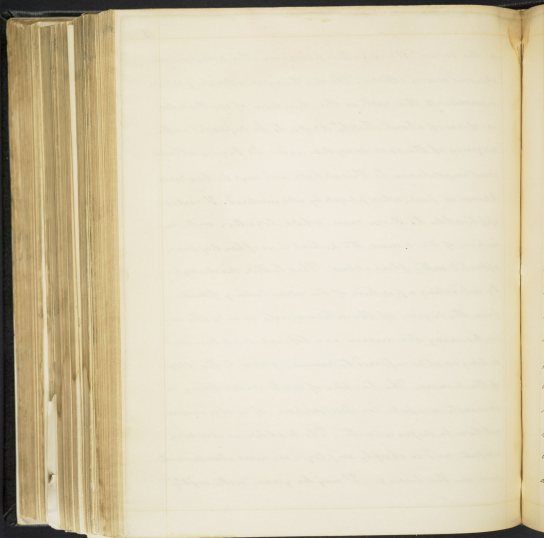
then, a regular course of exercise should be enjoined on the patient: that kind to be preferred which, while it invigorates the system, will at the same time, have the very important effect of determining the force of the circulation towards the uterus. Of this kind may be enumerated riding on horse back, jumping the rope and dancing, all of which, it should be remembered, are to be employed in moderation. The patients diet should consist of nutritive, tho' light easily digested animal and vegetable food. Of the tonic medicines which are often all important, the preparations of iron are perhaps preferable. Should it be necessary to purge the patient, those articles should be selected, which, from their property of stimulating more particularly the lower portion of the alimentary canal, may act indirectly on the uterus itself. The best article for this purpose is Aloes. The influence of this article on the



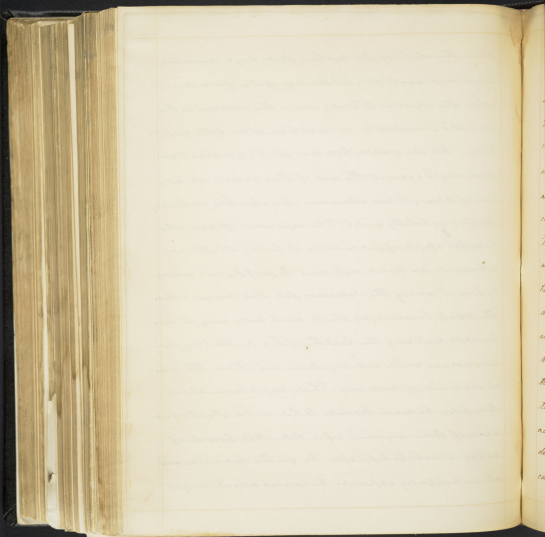
lower portion of the alimentary canal is strikingly peculiar. It is hence a very improper article in haemorrhoidal affections, and a very proper one in constipation of the bowels. Hence also its great utility in the derangement under consideration. When Retention is owing to a want of energy in the uterus itself our remedies should be directed principally to it. Here the secretory function of the uterus has been suspended, and it becomes the duty of the physician to endeavour to establish it, by the use of the appropriate remedies. These may be divided into external and internal. Among the former may be mentioned fomentations or sponging the parts with warm water and occasionally blisters. The last are particularly applicable to cases attended with much pain in the hips, back &c. Of the internal remedies many have at different times and by different writers ^{been} recommended



as the sabin, the mentha pulegium, the poligala ma-
 cha and many others. The one however which perhaps
 supersedes all the rest, is the linchura of cantharides,
 in doses of about thirty drops, to be repeated as the
 urgency of the case may demand. Dr Belloc attaches
 great importance to this article and says he has rarely
 known it fail, when properly administered. It is chiefly
 applicable to those cases, where, together with re-
 tention of the menses, the patient is, as often happens,
 affected with fluxus albus. This latter discharge,
 by detracting a portion of the circulating fluids
 from the region of the uterus, acts indirectly in
 continuing the disease, as a topical depletion, and
 so long as it is suffered to remain, prevents the flow
 of the menses. The linchura of cantharides being so
 eminently usefull in leucorrhoea, it is obvious, can-
 not here be dispensed with. The madder is also very
 usefull and is chiefly employed in cases attended with
 pain in the loins &c. It may be given with safety



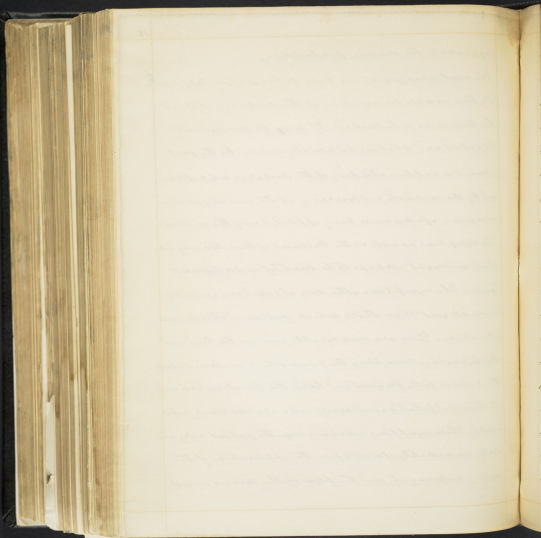
when the state of the system from high vascular excitement would forbid the use of the former, and where the object is to bring down the coarces, as they are called immediately, is an article of no little importance. We are aware however that objections have been urged against the use of this article in any case of deranged menstruation, the objectors contending that it is totally inert. The experience of men who have had ample opportunities of testing its efficacy is however, we think, sufficient to justify our recommending it among the remedies for this disease. Upon the whole however, we think much more may be done towards restoring the health of the patient, by proper exercise and a well regulated diet, than the actual exhibition of medicine. Their importance should therefore be made known to her and a strict observance of them enjoined upon her. Her bowels, if costive should be kept open by gentle laxatives and all unnecessary exposure to causes which might



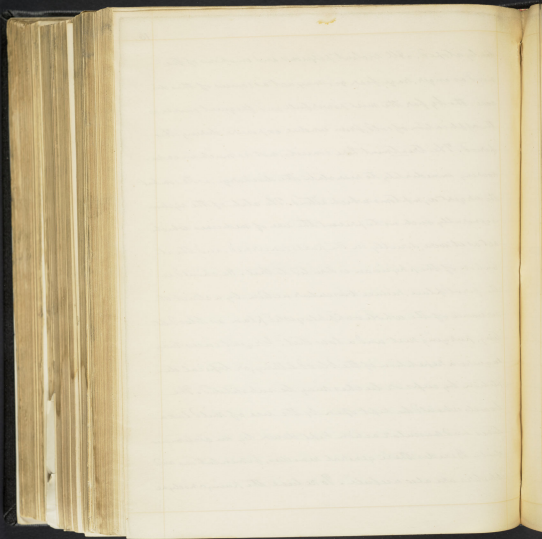
aggravate the disease forbiddden.

The next derangement we have to treat of is *Suppression*.

By this is meant a cessation of the discharge after it has been once established. It may be divided into *checked* and *obstructed menstruation*. By the first is meant a sudden stopping of the discharge while flowing, and by the second, its not recurring at the usual period, in consequence of some cause being applied, during the interval. The symptoms as well as the treatment of these two vary somewhat, and ought perhaps to be treated of under different heads. The symptoms attending *checked*, are generally more urgent than those which follow *obstructed menstruation*. These are considerable pain in the head and back, sometimes resembling the pains which occur in labour, the pulse is full, frequent and hard, the bowels constipated and to these palpitations and severe colic are sometimes super-added. These symptoms sometimes seize the patient very suddenly, immediately almost upon the application of the cause producing it, and the flow of the menses is sud-

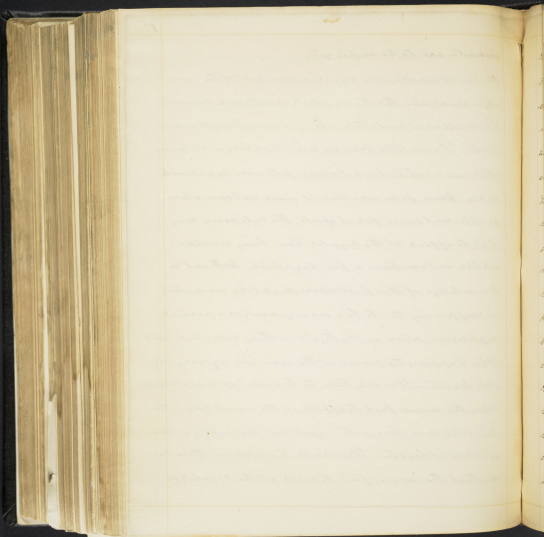


dently affected. All violent passions and emotions of the
 mind as anger, rage, fear &c. may act as causes of this dis-
 ease, tho' by far the most powerful and frequent cause is
 the application of cold, from undue exposure during this
 period. The treatment here consists, not so much in esca-
 pouring immediately to reinstate the discharge, as to combat
 the urgent symptoms which attend. The state of the system
 is generally such as to prevent the use of medicines which
 act as it were, directly on the part concerned, and the at-
 tention of the physician is directed to that. He should in
 the first place, reduce vascular action by a strict ob-
 servance of the whole antiphlogistic plan as bloodlet-
 ting, purging, rest and a low diet. In urgent cases may
 require a repetition of the blood letting, or topical de-
 stitution by cups or leeches may be substituted. The
 bowels should be kept open by the use of mild laxa-
 tives and vascular action kept down by an abstemious
 diet. Besides these general remedies, fomentations and
 blisters are also useful. To relieve the pain, anodyne

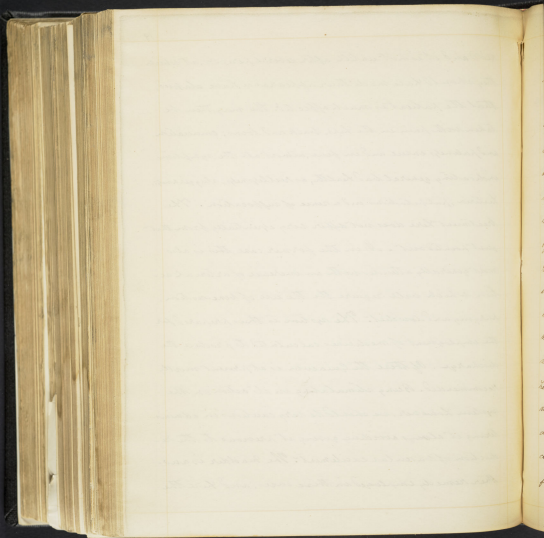


emmenata are to be employed.

Obstructed menstruation may arise from most of the causes above enumerated, tho' the one which operates more frequently here as well as in most other cases of deranged menstruation is cold. It should be born in mind that here as in many other cases, nature does not always follow one invariable course. Hence, from some critical cause, and even where no apparent cause for it exists; the catamenia may fail to appear at the regular time, being sometimes earlier and sometimes a few days later. Without a knowledge of this fact errors might be committed, in supposing this to be a derangement, or a partial suppression, when in truth, it is nothing more than what often happens; the woman at the same time enjoying very good health. It is only then, to be looked upon as a disease when the menses fail to appear at the usual time, attended at the same time, with symptoms indicating a deranged state of health. It generally happens in these cases, that the menses fail to occur at the regular pe-



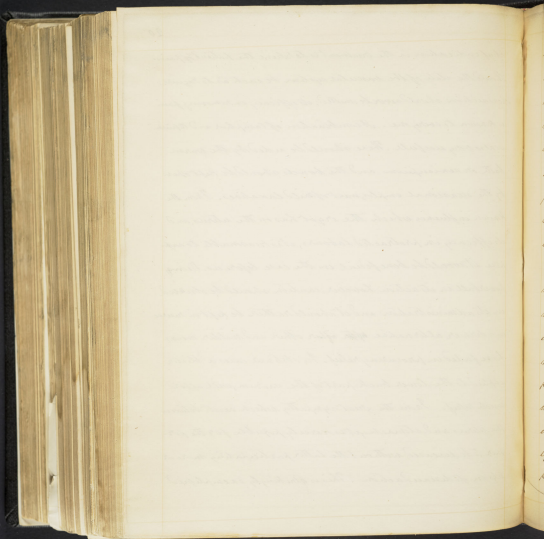
rise and it is not until after several periods, at which
 they should have made their appearance, have elapsed,
 that the patient is much affected. He may then be
 taken with pain in the hips, back and loins; emaciation
 and paleness; scarce and in fever, almost all the symptoms
 indicating general bad health, as restlessness, sluggishness,
 heaving, palpitations and a sense of suffocation. The
 treatment here does not differ very essentially from that
 just pointed out. As in the former case, this is also
 most generally attended with an increase of arterial ac-
 tion which will require the use of blood-letting,
 purging and low diet. The system is thus prepared for
 the employment of medicines calculated to produce the
 discharge. Of these the Guaiacum is at present mostly
 recommended. Being stimulating in its action on the
 system however, we should be very cautious in adminis-
 tering it always avoiding giving it previous to the re-
 duction of vascular excitement. The Madder is ano-
 ther remedy employed in these cases, and here the



same remark is applicable to it, that was made, while treating of its use in cases of Retention. The tincture of Cantharides is also very useful.

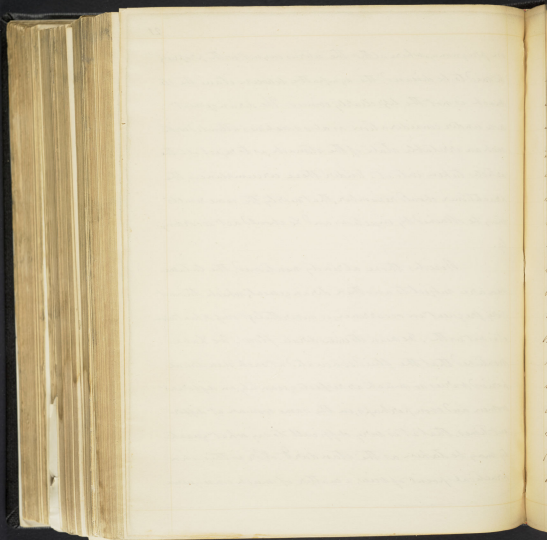
We come next to treat of Dysmenorrhœa or painful and difficult menstruation. The flow of the menses is generally attended with more or less inconvenience to the woman, tho' this cannot lead to almost to pain. It sometimes happens, however, that from some cause or other, and this is most generally the application of cold, the discharge is attended with insupportable suffering, the pain in some instances even exceeding that of labour itself, followed by a discharge so small in quantity, as almost to amount to a suppression. It is in this form of deranged menstruation that, owing to the altered and essential state of the secretory function of the uterus, this viscus cannot perform its healthy action, and in the place of the menses, an organized, membranous substance is formed, which is discharged with pain and difficulty, sometimes in large cakes, at others, in numerous small pieces, resembling clots of coagulated blood. From the great suffering which attends this derangement, it is obvious that the

chief indication in the treatment is to relieve the patient of pain. Should the state of the vascular system be such as to require, sponection should never be omitted; its efficacy in removing pain is known to every one. A combination of camphor and Opium is also very useful. Here should be aided by the warm bath or semicupium and the bowels should be kept open by the occasional employment of mild laxatives. From the known influence which the ergot has on the uterus, and its efficacy in protracted labours, it is reasonable to suppose it would be beneficial in the case before us. Being powerfull in its action, however, caution should be observed in its administration and it should rather be kept in reserve as a dernier alternative ~~after~~ after other and milder means have failed in procuring relief. In obstinate cases a blister applied to the lower back part of the uterus, will afford much relief. From the great sympathy which exists between the uterus and stomach, it is scarcely possible for the former to be diseased, without the latter participating more or less in its diseased action. This is strikingly exemplified



in pregnancy, where altho' the uterus cannot with propriety be said to be diseased, the sympathy between it and the stomach is not the less clearly evinced. The derangement now under consideration is also sometimes attended with such an irritable state of the stomach, as to reject all the articles taken into it. Under these circumstances, the practitioner should remember, that nearly the same results may be obtained by injections and he should act accordingly.

Besides those already mentioned, the Catamenia are subject to another derangement, which tho' not very frequent in occurrence, is nevertheless important when it is met with. We mean its immoderate flow. We have mentioned that the fluid evacuated at each menstrual period, varies so much as respects quantity, in different women and even perhaps, in the same woman at different times, that it is very difficult to say what quantity may be taken as the standard. Nor is this, in a practical point of view, a matter of much consequence.



The very irregularity we have just noticed should admonish us that we are not to decide from the mere quantity discharged, whether or not it amounts to a disease, but from its effects on the system. It seldom happens that the quantity is so great as to produce any deleterious consequences, and when it is, symptoms denoting debility present themselves. When this is the case we should endeavour to check the discharge as soon as possible, by keeping the patient in an horizontal posture, with her hips somewhat elevated to determine the flow of blood from the uterus. At the same time cool acidulated drinks should be given her and she should be kept in a cool atmosphere. Besides these remedies, in obstinate cases the saccharum saturarum may be administered internally, an Ointment thrown up the vagina with laudanum. Or in every other case the bowels should be kept in a soluble state by mild laxatives. To prevent its return, a proper course of exercise and regimen should be enjoined on the patient. We are next to treat of the dyspa-

tion of the menses, or their irregularities towards the decline of life. This is looked upon by most women as a critical line with them, for now, wherever there has previously existed any tendency to them, organic derangements are apt to appear, such as affections of the liver, cancer of the uterus, breast &c. Dyspepsia is also likely to come on. The abdomen has been known to swell in some instances to such a degree as to induce the woman to believe herself pregnant. It has been mentioned before, that towards the decline of the menses great irregularity was often observable. Caution is here necessary also, but we be too hasty in prescribing medicines. As in every other case the effects on the system at large should be our guide.

Any of the derangements we have spoken of may occur at this time and when they do, they must be treated in the manner that was pointed out when treating of each, and upon the same principles. Should the menses be immoderate at this time of

life however, it is of more consequence to check it, as the debility induced may be followed by more serious consequences. Nothing at this time of life, can be of more importance to a woman than a regular course of exercise and a well regulated diet.

By observing regularity in these respects, much may be done towards preventing those irregularities so much dreaded and so often followed by serious consequences. It is by such a course, that vascular excitement is best kept down, and a regularity and just equilibrium maintained throughout the different parts and systems of the body, and consequently, the irregularities of the Catamenia in a measure at least, prevented. Any organic derangement which may occur, should be treated upon principles applicable to such diseases, when met with under other circumstances.

From a review of the whole subject, a few practical deductions may be drawn which are applicable to all women under all circumstances. To have

The first of these is the
 fact that the number of
 cases of the disease has
 increased in the last
 year. This is due to the
 fact that the disease is
 more common in the
 winter months. It is also
 more common in the
 lower classes of society.
 The second fact is that
 the disease is more
 common in the lower
 classes of society. This
 is due to the fact that
 the lower classes are
 more exposed to the
 disease. The third fact
 is that the disease is
 more common in the
 lower classes of society.
 This is due to the fact
 that the lower classes
 are more exposed to the
 disease. The fourth fact
 is that the disease is
 more common in the
 lower classes of society.
 This is due to the fact
 that the lower classes
 are more exposed to the
 disease.

run that by far the most frequent and powerfull
 cause of deranged menstruation is the application of
 cold from imprudent exposure. The impropriety of
 such a course should be made known to the female and
 the influence which prudence in this respect has on
 her health should be impressed upon her. This is the
 more especially necessary, as women are occasionally met
 with who are very negligent on this point, and ~~even~~
 cases have occurred where they have even gone so far,
 as designedly to check the menses, when a party of plea-
 sure has been in view. Could the folly and danger
 of such conduct be duly impressed upon the minds
 of females, many of the derange ments of menstrua-
 tion would, we are convinced, be almost entirely
 prevented.

